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Protecting Autonomy, Protecting Relatedness: Appraisal Patterns of Daily Anger and Shame in the United States and Japan

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Protecting autonomy, protecting relatedness:

Appraisal patterns of daily anger and shame in the United States and Japan

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Abstract

The present study tested the idea that U.S. and Japanese participants appraise anger and shame situations in line with the American concern for autonomy and the Japanese concern for relatedness. Sixty-five U.S. and 72 Japanese students participated in a seven-day diary study of anger and shame. Each day, participants reported their most important anger and shame incident and indicated whether they themselves or others were to be blamed (anger appraisals), and whether they focused on themselves or the opinion of others (shame appraisals). They also indicated whether they had experienced anger toward someone close or distant and whether their shame was publicly seen or privately felt. In line with the Japanese concern for protecting relatedness, Japanese compared to U.S. participants blamed themselves relatively more than others during anger situations with close others and focused on others rather than themselves during shame episodes that were publicly seen. Underlining the U.S. concern for protecting autonomy, Americans blamed others more than themselves during anger situations and focused more on themselves than others during shame situations.

(172/175 words)

Keywords: Culture, emotion, appraisal, anger, shame

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Anger and shame are both about the relationship between an individual and others around them: People feel angry when others offend them, and people experience shame when they failed in the eyes of others. However, cultures differ in how relationships between people are modeled: For example, maintaining individual autonomy in relationships is emphasized in North American relationships, whereas ensuring relatedness between people is underlined in Japan (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1994). Consequently, one may expect that North Americans and Japanese experience anger and shame in interpersonal situations differently: North Americans may interpret or appraise anger and shame events in ways that promote and protect their autonomy, whereas Japanese may appraise those events in ways that promote and protect their relatedness. The current study tested this idea for a sample of everyday experiences of anger and shame in the United States and Japan.

Relationship Ideals in the United States and Japan

What it means to have proper and good relationships differs across cultures (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 1994; Rothbaum, Pott, Azuma, Miyake, & Weisz, 2000). In European American (middle-class) contexts, a good relationship between two people is one in which people remain autonomous and help each other in strengthening their independence and individuality (Kim & Markus, 1999; Rothbaum et al., 2000; Triandis, 1995). People achieve and protect autonomy in their relationships by focusing on themselves and their own goals rather than on those of others (i.e., taking an “inside-out” perspective, Cohen & Gunz, 2002) and by doing things that make them feel good about themselves; consequently, there is also an emphasis on high self-esteem (Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999).

In contrast, relationship ideals in Japanese contexts emphasize relatedness and interdependence between people and the need to adjust to each other’s expectations in order

to maintain harmonious relations (Kim & Markus, 1999; Morling, Kitayama, & Miyamoto, 2002; Rothbaum et al., 2000). People protect relatedness and keep relationships smooth by frequently taking the perspective of others (i.e., an “outside-in” perspective, Cohen & Gunz, 2002; Ma-Kellams & Blascovich, 2012). This comes with a tendency to adopt a more self-critical stance and to focus on negative information about the self (Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997); being self-critical is positively rewarded by one’s close others (Kitayama & Markus, 2000). The central idea in this paper is that these different relationship ideals shape the way Americans and Japanese appraise anger and shame situations.

Cultural Variation in the Appraisals of Anger and Shame

To what extent specific cultural ideas and practices are linked to emotional experience is a matter of ongoing debate (e.g., Matsumoto & Hwang, 2011). Although there appears to be some agreement that emotional antecedents and emotion expression are influenced by culture (Boiger, Mesquita, Uchida, & Barrett, 2013; Ekman, 1992; Mesquita & Frijda, 1992), the role of culture for the “content” of emotional experience is less clear. In the current study, we start from the idea that the content of emotional experience consists of several components (Clore, 1992; Mesquita, 2003; Scherer, 1984, 2009; Shweder, Haidt, Horton, & Joseph, 2008; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985), which are organized by the individual’s interpretation of the situation, called *appraisal* (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003). This multi-componential perspective makes it possible to analyze emotional experience in terms of each of these components, and thus to establish variation *within* the experience of a specific emotion. In the current study, we will focus on variation in the appraisals that are strongly associated with anger and shame.

That analyzing cultural variation in appraisals is a worthwhile endeavor is suggested by the finding that even people from the same culture differ in their typical appraisals of

anger (Kuppens, Van Mechelen, Smits, & De Boeck, 2003). If people from the same culture differ in their anger appraisals, there is no reason to assume universality across cultures *a priori* (cf. Ellsworth, 1994). In fact, the little research that investigated cultural variation in emotional components generally supports the idea that the culturally typical configuration of components appears to reflect the dominant cultural ideas of how to be a person and how to relate to others (for a review, see Mesquita, 2003). For example, our own research on word-associations in Belgium and the United States has shown that the action tendencies commonly associated with anger and shame are those that highlight the functionality of the emotion for the respective goals of competitive individualism (in the United States) and egalitarian individualism (in Belgium) (Boiger, De Deyne, & Mesquita, 2013). To give an example, anger was found to be primarily associated with aggressive action tendencies in the U.S. (reflecting its assertive function in a competitive environment), but had secondary connotations of wanting to move away in Belgium (reflecting a more ambivalent stance in an egalitarian environment that restrains self-assertion to the extent that it trespasses on the autonomy of others).

In the present research, we compared the emotions of anger and shame because translations of these concepts have been found across cultures (e.g., Mesquita, 1993; Scherer & Wallbott, 1994; Shaver, Wu, & Schwartz, 1992) and because they represent highly interpersonal scenarios. Whereas anger tends to be perceived (by both Americans and Japanese) as an emotion that separates the individual from the social environment, shame is perceived to highlight the connectedness of people (Kitayama, Mesquita, & Karasawa, 2006). Different from previous research, the current study aimed (a) to include appraisals that may be culturally relevant for Japanese participants but that had not been systematically compared across cultures before and (b) to study appraisals of high ecological validity, that is, as they were experienced during daily emotional events instead of recalled or hypothetical scenarios.

Anger: Blaming others or blaming yourself?

Anger is an emotion that highlights when others have done something that one does not like or does not want. Appraisals that play a central role for anger are the belief that others are to be blamed, that one's goals are being blocked in a frustrating manner, that what happened is unfair or illegitimate, and that one's self-esteem is threatened (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003; Kuppens, Van Mechelen, Smits, De Boeck, & Ceulemans, 2007). All of these appraisals highlight a first-person or inside-out perspective and especially other-accountability or other-blame aligns with the relationship ideal of autonomy. However, there is some indication that Americans and Japanese differ in their anger appraisals and that Japanese take into account appraisals that have not been considered central by previous emotion research.

Mesquita and colleagues (2007) found in interviews on offense that Americans experience more appraisals that highlight their independence, whereas Japanese experience more appraisals that reflect interdependence. More specifically, Americans focused on blaming the offender without questioning the event or trying to see the event from the other's perspective, thus taking primarily an inside-out perspective. While the Japanese also blamed the offender, they focused to a larger extent on sympathizing with the offender and thus additionally interpreted the event from an outside-in perspective. Thus, in a situation of offense, cultural ideals of autonomy and separateness may render the blameworthiness of others salient, whereas ideals that highlight relatedness and accommodation may promote a more self-critical stance that focuses on understanding the motives of the offender. These results stress that meaningful cultural differences may not so much lie in the appraisal most centrally associated with an emotion, but in the *relative weight* given to different appraisals, an idea that we will refer to as "*appraisal focus*".

Based on these first qualitative findings, we predicted that Americans protect their autonomy by blaming others more than themselves and that they would do so more than the Japanese. In contrast, we expected that, in the same kinds of situations, Japanese protect their relationships with others by focusing relatively more on what they may have done wrong themselves rather than what others did wrong. While other-blame is likely also the dominant appraisal in Japan, the relative focus should shift more towards self-blame compared to the United States.

Shame: Focusing on the opinion of others or on yourself?

Shame highlights a negative self-evaluation. The typical appraisals associated with the experience of shame are a high relevance to identity-goals, the tendency to self-blame and a negative effect on self-esteem (Scherer, 1997; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985; Tracy & Robins, 2004). To our knowledge, there is no research comparing the appraisals of shame in the United States and Japan, but previous research from the United States, China and Spain may give some pointers. Shame in the United States appears to be primarily associated with appraisals that reflect personal failure, low-self esteem and self-reproach; in contrast, both the Spanish and Chinese appraisals associated with shame highlight the focus on others (Hurtado de Mendoza, Fernández-Dols, Parrott, & Carrera, 2010; Mascolo, Fischer, & Li, 2003).

These differences appear to reflect the dominant relationship concerns in the respective cultures. In the United States, shame is primarily appraised from a first-person perspective and in terms of its personal consequences: A tendency to focus on what one has done wrong and potential negative effects on self-esteem is thus central—highlighting (the failure in accomplishing) the U.S. goals for self-sufficiency and self-enhancement (see also Boiger, Mesquita, et al., 2013; Crystal, Parrott, Okazaki, & Watanabe, 2001). In the Chinese and Spanish context, where relatedness is relatively more emphasized, the typical shame appraisals reflect a concern for the opinion of others or a person's obligation towards others.

This concern for others may extend to Japan: The Japanese focus on relatedness should also come with a tendency to appraise shame primarily from an outside-in perspective and in terms of its social consequences: A compromised public self (*sekentei*) and negative consequences for other-esteem are expected to play a more central role than one's own take on the situation (Crystal et al., 2001; see also Ito, 2000; Mascolo et al., 2003; Mesquita & Karasawa, 2004).

In sum, we predicted that the American concern for autonomy came with a tendency to appraise the shameful situation in terms of one's own involvement rather than in terms of how others perceive the event, and that Americans would display this tendency more than Japanese. In comparison, we expected that the Japanese concern for relatedness came with a relatively stronger focus on how the situation affects other people's opinion of them rather than themselves.

The Role of Context for Appraisal Focus

Because previous research has shown that Japanese compared to Americans experience emotions as relational events that are more strongly influenced by the specific context (Masuda et al., 2008; Uchida, Townsend, Markus, & Bergsieker, 2009), we expected that in Japan, appraisal focus may depend on the situational context. For *anger*, previous research indicated that relational closeness is a likely candidate: Japanese were found to experience anger primarily towards out-group members and report only little anger in intimate relationships; consistently, anger is primarily expressed as a marker of social status and authority in Japan (Park et al., 2013; Scherer, Wallbott, Matsumoto, & Kudoh, 1988). Although these findings were concerned with anger intensity and not anger appraisals, it is imaginable that a more self-critical appraisal focus protects relationships with close others in Japan exactly because it decreases the intensity of anger. At the same time, a more self-

critical appraisal focus may play a smaller role in situations with distant others, because relatedness is less of a concern in this kind of situations.

For *shame*, it likely is the extent to which the situation is publicly seen or privately felt that should matter for the appraisal focus of Japanese. Previous research found that, in line with the emphasis on a third-person perspective, Japanese experience shame primarily in situations in which their public face is at stake (Boiger, Mesquita, et al., 2013; Crystal et al., 2001). This emphasis on shame in situations of public exposure may have to do with the predicted focus on a third-person perspective, which should matter more in public situations. In comparison, situations that are privately felt should make the salience of others relatively less relevant and possibly rather increase self-critical appraisals for Japanese. In contrast, Americans primarily experience shame as a revelation of personal flaws (Boiger, Mesquita, et al., 2013; Crystal et al., 2001). The extent to which personal flaws are exposed in public or privately felt should matter less for Americans, as a first-person perspective does not discriminate between these types contexts to the same extent: In both contexts, the focus is on the (flawed) individual.

To summarize, we predicted that appraisal focus would depend on the social context for Japanese but not for Americans. Specifically, we predicted that Japanese would be particularly interested in protecting their relationships with close others and therefore show relatively more self-blame in *anger* situations that involve close others compared to situations that involve distant others. This also implies that the predicted cultural difference in appraisal focus should be particularly visible in situations with close others. For *shame*, we predicted that the perspective of others should matter to Japanese especially in situations in which they are publicly exposed compared to situations that are privately felt. Moreover, because privately felt shame may afford relatively more self-focus in both cultures, we expected that

the cultural difference in appraisal focus should be particularly pronounced in situations of public exposure.

The Current Study

The goal of the present study was to show that different relationship ideals in the United States and Japan affect the way people in these cultures interpret anger and shame events. In this view, emotions are variable processes that, depending on the culture or the specific context, take different shapes; which exact shape an emotion takes—or, in the case of this study, which emotional appraisals stand out—can be predicted from the relational concerns or ideals that matter in the respective cultures or relational contexts. We tested this idea in a daily diary study, in which participants reported their appraisal focus during anger and shame situations from their daily life for seven consecutive days. Our approach was innovative in a number of ways: First, we included anger and shame appraisals that may be relatively more important in Japan, but that have received little or no attention in past appraisal research. Second, we derived and tested predictions on people's appraisal focus for specific relational contexts rather than averaging across contexts. Finally, this is the first study to systematically test cultural differences in people's appraisals using an experience-sampling paradigm.

Method

Participants

Participants were 65 American (48 female) students from Minnesota State University (Mankato) and 72 Japanese (33 female) students from Kyoto University and Tokyo Woman's Christian University. Twelve U.S. participants and six Japanese participants were excluded because they completed the diary on less than 50% of all days (i.e., less than 4 days) and one U.S. and one Japanese participant were excluded because they did not fulfill the study criteria (having grown up in their country of residence, currently being a student). The final sample

consisted of 52 Americans (41 female) and 65 Japanese (30 female) participants. One American student was born outside the United States, but had moved there before the age of four. All the Japanese students were born in Japan. The U.S. participants identified as White/Caucasian American (78.8%), Asian/Asian-American (15.4%), Hispanic/Latino-American (0.02%), and other (0.02%); one participant (0.02%) did not report their ethnicity. The age of the U.S. participants ($M = 20.83$, $SD = 1.94$) did not differ significantly from the age of the Japanese participants ($M = 21.40$, $SD = 2.52$), $t(115) = 1.31$, $p = .18$.

The majority of the U.S. participants completed the study as part of a course requirement. Twenty-four additional U.S. participants and all Japanese participants received payment for their participation (a total of 22 USD or 2000 JPY for the participation in this study and for completing an additional questionnaire on emotional experience). The majority of the U.S. and all Japanese participants had indicated their interest to participate in this study as a follow-up to a previous study on emotional experience. In the United States, we additionally recruited 14 participants through university participant lists; those participants first completed the daily diary study and then the above-mentioned additional questionnaire.

Materials and procedures

Demographics. On the first day of the daily diary study, participants reported their age, sex, major/year of study, ethnicity (in the United States only), place of birth, years spent in the United States/Japan if they had been born abroad, their mother's and father's place of birth, and their socioeconomic status.

Daily diary. Participants received personal reminders with instructions on how to fill in the diary each night during seven consecutive days. Every night, participants were emailed an ID number and a link with which they could log on to the diary website; they were instructed (a) to take some time think about their day before deciding that they did not experience a specific situation, (b) to fill in the diaries by themselves and (c) to do so before

going to bed. Participants were allowed to skip a day for exceptional circumstances and were informed that they would have to make up for any skipped days and that the study would then last longer. Participants who skipped one or more days were sent maximally three reminders to complete all seven days. After excluding participants who completed less than half of the seven days or who did not fulfill the study criteria, the majority of the remaining participants completed seven consecutive days (46.1% in the U.S.; 55.4% in Japan), completed seven (non-consecutive) days after responding to reminders (44.2% in the U.S.; 44.6% in Japan), or completed less than seven but at least 50% of all days (9.6% in the U.S.; none in Japan).

The diary questionnaire consisted of two sections: A section on anger and a section on shame. The order of the sections was randomized within participants and over days, so that participants would first complete the anger section on some days and first the shame section on other days, but they always completed both sections. In each section, participants were first asked how many situations they had experienced that day in which they felt the respective emotion – i.e., “angry with someone (this includes, for example, being angry, mad, or annoyed with someone)” or “shame (this includes, for example, feeling humbled, feeling inadequate, or feeling embarrassed)”. If participants experienced one or more situations related to the first emotion, more detailed questions about the (most important) situation were asked (see below); then the questionnaire continued with the second emotion. If participants did not experience any situation related to the first emotion, the questionnaire directly continued with the second emotion without asking further questions. If neither emotional situation was experienced that day, the questionnaire terminated.

If participants indicated that they experienced one (or more) situation(s) related to anger/shame, the following more detailed questions were asked: Participants were instructed to remember the (most important) situation as vividly as possible, to describe the situation in detail, and to indicate who was present during the situation. Next, participants reported in

more detail on the relational/social context of the situation. For anger situations, they indicated how “distant (e.g., a stranger) or close (e.g., a partner)” the person was who made them angry on a Likert scale ranging from -3 (very distant) to 3 (very close), with the mid-point of the scale being defined as neutral. For shame situations, participants indicated how “public (seen by others) or private (experienced by yourself)” the situation was in which they felt shame on a Likert scale ranging from -3 (very public) to 3 (very private), with the midpoint of the scale being defined as neutral.¹

To measure the appraisal focus of other-blame vs. self-blame (for anger) and other-focus vs. self-focus (for shame), we asked participants to indicate to what extent each of the following statements applied to how they experienced the situation (on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 0 = not at all to 6 = very much): “I felt that the other(s) is/are responsible for what happened” (other-blame in anger situations), “I focused on what I should have done to avoid the situation” (self-blame in anger situations), “I focused on what the other(s) is/are thinking of me” (other-focus in shame situations) and “I blamed myself for the outcome of the situation” (self-focus in shame situations).² All material was developed in English and then translated to Japanese. A professional translator who grew up partly in the United States and partly in Japan was recruited for the translation to Japanese. The translation was checked for accuracy by one of the co-authors, a native Japanese-speaker.

Response Rates and Situation Selection

U.S. participants completed the diary for an average of 6.79 days ($SD = .75$), and Japanese for an average of 7.00 ($SD = .00$) days, $U = 1527.5$, $p < .05$. Compared to the Japanese participants, the U.S. participants less frequently reported to have encountered at least one anger or one shame situation on any of the 7 days, although the difference was not significant for anger: U.S. participants reported at least one anger situation on average on 37.8% of all days ($SD = 25.5\%$, total number of anger situations rated = 131), and Japanese

participants reported at least one anger situation on average on 41.3% of all days ($SD = 29.0\%$, total number of shame situations rated = 188), $U = 1603.5$, $p = .63$. For shame, the U.S. participants reported having encountered at least one shame situation on average on 24.0% of all days ($SD = 25.2\%$, total number of shame situations rated = 84), and Japanese participants reported at least one shame situation on average on 41.8% of all days ($SD = 29.7\%$, total number of anger situations rated = 190), $U = 1065$, $p < .001$.

A research assistant read all situation descriptions and coded them for being interpersonal (that is, involving another person) or not. Interpersonal situations were defined as situations that involved family, partners, friends, group members, hierarchical relationships, strangers, or unspecified others. Non-interpersonal situations were defined as situations that involved fate, imaginary others or vicarious emotions (e.g., being angry for what happened to someone else). The reliability of the coding scheme was established for a random subset of 30 situations per emotion and culture, by having the first author code these independently a second time. Because inter-rater agreement was nearly perfect, all other situations were coded only by the research assistant. We excluded all situations that were not interpersonal in nature for our analyses, because the appraisals of interest imply the involvement of another person and because it should be primarily during interpersonal situations that the cultural relationship ideals of autonomy and relatedness are negotiated and enacted. After excluding non-interpersonal situations, the final sample of situations analyzed consisted of 173 U.S. situations (66.5 % anger) and 333 Japanese situations (48.9% anger).

Results

To account for the nested structure of the data (daily situations nested within participants), we specified multilevel models in MLwiN 2.27 (Rasbash, Browne, Healy, Cameron, & Charlton, 2013). We specified random intercepts, accounting for individual-level variance, whenever a random intercept improved model fit. A binary variable was

created to distinguish between situations with close and distant others (for anger) and for situations that were publicly seen or privately felt (for shame). As both the close-distant and public-private scale included a midpoint that was defined as “neutral”, the midpoint of these scales was recoded into missing values (10.8% for close-distant, 7.5% for public-private). Because we predicted differences in participants relative appraisal focus (and not in their absolute levels), we calculated difference scores between the appraisals of interest: To capture the appraisal focus on other- vs. self-blame we subtracted self-blame from other-blame and to capture the appraisal focus on other- vs. self-focus we subtracted self-focus from other-focus. For ease of interpretation, we calculated difference scores for anger and shame appraisals in a similar way: For both emotions, we subtracted the appraisal reflecting a first-person perspective from the appraisal reflecting a third-person perspective.

Appraisal Focus During Anger Situations

We predicted that the American concern for protecting autonomy would come with a tendency to relatively blame others more than oneself during anger situations. In comparison, we expected that the Japanese concern for protecting relatedness would imply a relatively stronger focus on what one may have done wrong oneself rather than what others did wrong. In line with our expectations, U.S. ($b = 1.93$, intercept significantly different from zero: $Z = 7.70$, $p < .01$) and Japanese ($b = 2.03$, intercept significantly different from zero: $Z = 8.28$, $p < .01$) participants both had an overall tendency to blame others rather than themselves during anger episodes. However, we did not find the cross-cultural differences we expected: When looking at participants’ appraisal focus across relational contexts, we did not find the expected relative emphasis on other blame in the United States and on self-blame in Japan. Instead, Americans and Japanese did not differ in their overall tendency to blame other’s rather than themselves, as indicated by a grand-intercept model with culture added as a predictor (0 = United States, 1 = Japan), $b = 0.08$, $Z = 0.23$, $p = 0.82$.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

However, the predicted pattern of cultural differences emerged when taking the relational context into account. First, and in line with our expectations, the cultural differences in the participants' appraisal focus depended on the relational context, as indicated by the significant culture (0 = United States, 1 = Japan) x context (0 = distant, 1 = close) interaction, $b = -1.83$, $Z = 3.11$, $p < 0.01$. To interpret this interaction, we specified a multivariate multi-level model with separate intercepts for appraisal focus during distant and close situations in each culture (see, e.g., Quene, 2004). In this type of analysis, the grand intercept is replaced by dummy-coded variables for each combination of the two categorical variables (in our case, two cultures x two contexts), resulting in four separate intercepts. Wald chi-square tests were used to test for significant differences between intercepts. As shown in Figure 1 and in line with our expectations, Japanese reported relatively more self-blame in anger situations that involved close others compared to situations that involved distant others (that is, the difference between other-blame and self-blame was smaller), $\chi^2(1) = 24.01$, $p < .001$. In comparison, and as expected, the American participants did not distinguish between relational contexts in their relative emphasis on other- vs. self-blame ($\chi^2(1) = 0.85$, $p = .36$). We also expected that the cultural difference in appraisal focus should be particularly visible during situations with close others. This was indeed the case: Japanese compared to U.S. participants relatively blamed themselves more than others in situations with close others, $\chi^2(1) = 3.50$, $p < .05$ (one-sided). However, the pattern unexpectedly reversed in situations with distant others: In situations with distant others, Japanese compared to U.S. participants reported relatively *more* other- than self-blame, $\chi^2(1) = 5.42$, $p < .05$.

Appraisal Focus During Shame Situations

For shame, we expected that the American concern for autonomy would come with a tendency to appraise the shameful situation more in terms of how it affects oneself than how

it affects somebody else's opinion. In comparison, we expected that the Japanese concern for relatedness would come with a tendency to focus on how the situation affects other people's opinions rather than oneself. In line with our expectations, Japanese participants generally focused more on how the shameful event affected the opinion of others rather than themselves ($b = 0.77$, intercept significantly different from zero, $Z = 4.49$, $p < .001$). Contrary to our expectations, American participants focused equally on others and on themselves ($b = -0.28$, intercept not significantly different from zero, $Z = .95$, $p = .34$). However, as expected, the relative focus on others vs. self was higher in Japan than the United States, as indicated by a grand-intercept model with culture added as a predictor (0 = United States, 1 = Japan), $b = 1.12$, $Z = 3.44$, $p < .001$.

[INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE]

In line with our predictions, the pattern of cultural differences differed between public and private contexts, as the marginally significant culture (0 = United States, 1 = Japan) x context (0 = public, 1 = private) interaction suggested, $b = -1.03$, $Z = 1.68$, $p = 0.09$. Again, we specified a multivariate multi-level model with four separate intercepts (two cultures x two contexts) for appraisal focus during public and private situations in each culture. Figure 2 shows the pattern of other- vs. self-focused appraisal focus for the cultural groups in the two kinds of situations. Although the difference was in the expected direction, Japanese did not show the expected appraisal focus on others rather than themselves during situations of public exposure compared to situations that were privately felt, $\chi^2(1) = 1.27$, $p < .26$. In line with our predictions, the U.S. participants also did not distinguish between public and private contexts in their relative appraisal of other- vs. self-focus, $\chi^2(1) = 0.95$, $p = .33$. Further confirming our expectations, we did find that the predicted cultural difference was particularly pronounced during situations of public exposure: Japanese compared to U.S. participants focused relatively more on the opinion of others than on themselves in situations in which

their shame were publicly seen, $\chi^2(1) = 9.97, p < .001$; supporting our predictions, no cultural difference was found for situations in which shame was privately felt, $\chi^2(1) = 1.82, p = .18$.

Discussion

The current study set out to test the idea that the different relationship ideals in the United States and Japan affect the way people in these cultures interpret anger and shame events. Based on previous research, we had predicted that Americans are more interested in protecting their autonomy, whereas Japanese are more motivated to protect relatedness with others. Using a daily diary approach in which participants reported on their most important anger and shame events of the day during one week, we found that American and Japanese ways of appraising anger and shame events differed in line with these relationship ideals: We found that, in line with the Japanese concern for protecting relatedness with others, Japanese compared to U.S. participants blamed themselves more than their close others during anger situations and focused more on others than themselves during shame episodes of public exposure. In line with the American concern for protecting individual autonomy, American compared to Japanese participants blamed close others more than themselves during anger situations and focused more on themselves than others during shame situations.

For anger, the relational context of the emotional event mattered for how participants appraised the event: Only when we analyzed the data separately for situations with close and distant others, did we find the predicted cultural differences in appraisal focus. Based on previous research, we had predicted that Japanese were particularly interested in protecting their relationships with *close others* and that they should therefore focus relatively more on self-blame during these kinds of situations. This was the case: In situations with close others, the relative focus on self-blame was stronger than in situations with distant others, and it was significantly different from what the U.S. participants reported; although Japanese participants still reported more other-blame than self-blame, the relative focus shifted

towards self-blame when Japanese experienced anger at close others. For the Americans, the appraisal focus was on other-blame, regardless of anger being experienced with close or distant others.

Surprisingly, we found that the Japanese pattern of self- vs. other-blame reversed in situations with distant others. In these situations, the Japanese participants actually blamed others relatively more than in situations with close others, and they did so more than the Americans. One possible explanation for this finding is that anger appears to be a marker of social status in Japan (Park et al., 2013) and may therefore not require self-critical assessment in situations with distant others. In other words, if Japanese get angry at distant others, they do so because this is the appropriate experience of someone with high status and relatively little attention has to be paid to one's own contribution. This would imply that, in Japan, anger primarily fulfills its disengaging function (that is, it separates the individual from the environment, Kitayama et al., 2006) during interactions with distant others. During interactions with close others, anger may actually play a relatively more engaging or relationship-building role because it pulls people's attention towards self-criticism, which is positively rewarded by close others (Kitayama & Markus, 2000).

For shame, the overall difference between American and Japanese participants in appraisal focus was more pronounced; however, context also mattered to some extent. During shame events, Japanese reported the expected emphasis on the opinions of others rather than on themselves. While the Americans unexpectedly reported an equally strong focus on themselves and others, the relative focus differed from the Japanese participants in the expected direction: Americans, compared to Japanese, focused relatively more strongly on themselves during shame situations. As expected, this cultural difference was mainly driven by situations of public exposure. Only in those situations, did the two cultural groups differ significantly in their appraisal focus. Contrary to our expectations, the Japanese participants

did not show a stronger focus on others' opinions in public compared to private situations. It is not entirely clear why this was the case. One possible explanation may be that we underestimated how pervasive the focus on other-esteem is in the Japanese culture, and that privately felt situations are also primarily judged by external standards.

Limitations

Even though a daily diary approach ensures high ecological validity, having people rate daily events also comes with weaknesses. For example, we cannot exclude the possibility that the situations that participants experienced differed systematically between the United States and Japan in ways that promoted a different appraisal-focus in the two cultures. In the current study, we tried to limit this possibility by having participants rate the situations on relevant contextual dimensions: relational closeness for anger and the extent to which the situation was publicly seen or privately felt for shame. These dimensions have been deduced from previous research in the two cultures (Boiger, Mesquita, et al., 2013), and were intended to capture some of the variance in the reported situations. The fact that our pattern of results differed systematically between these contexts suggests that we did capture meaningful variance between situational contexts. However, future research may want to replicate our findings for a set of standardized anger and shame situations from the two cultures.

A further weakness of the daily diary approach is that it is not possible to control or predict the number of situations that people will encounter. In the current study, the rate was lower in the United States than in Japan and it was particularly low for the number of shame situations that Americans had experienced. This implies that we had relatively few shame situations from the United States on which we could base our analyses, which consequently translated to less power and—as is evident in Figure 2—larger standard errors. It is therefore imaginable that some of the predicted differences, such as the emphasis on self-focus during shame situations in the United States, were not detectable because of the small sample size.

One explanation for the generally lower response rate in the United States may have been differences in motivation of the unpaid participants in the United States: The questionnaires were set up to skip detailed questions on anger or shame if no suitable event had occurred that day, thus incentivizing null-responses for participants who wanted to finish the study quickly. Future daily diary research may benefit from using a design that employs filler items on days with no fitting experience, especially if participants are not paid. Moreover, experience sampling studies on “hypocognized” or undesirable emotions, such as shame in the United States (see Boiger, Mesquita, et al., 2013; Cohen, 2003), may also benefit from collecting data over longer periods of time (i.e., two weeks or more).

Finally, the current study relied on student samples from specific regions of the U.S. and Japan and the findings may therefore not generalize to the population at large. However, it is noteworthy that the sample of students that we collected in the U.S. actually made for a rather conservative test of our hypotheses: The U.S. data were collected in Minnesota, where people are relatively more relational than in the coastal United States (due to farming and low residential mobility, see Oishi et al., 2007).

Conclusion

Friedrich Nietzsche (1886/2008) once noted in his astute way of observing the human condition that “[i]t is not sufficient to use the same words in order to understand one another: we must also employ the same words for the same kind of internal experiences, we must in the end have experiences *in common* [italics in original]” (p. 121). Unwittingly, this quote summarizes the findings of this study: Speaking of anger or shame entails different meanings across cultures and in each culture, a typical pattern of appraisals or “internal experiences” is associated with how people experience their emotions. Moreover, these differences are not random, but can be seen as intentional construals of selves experiencing and engaging in different cultural realities: North Americans appraise anger and shame events in ways that

promote and protect their autonomy, whereas Japanese appraise those events in ways that promote and protect their relatedness; in both cultural contexts, people experience emotions in ways that make them a good and typical person in their culture.

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Figure 1. The appraisal of anger situations in terms of other- vs. self-blame, shown for situations with close and distant others. The higher the difference score, the more participants blamed others than themselves.

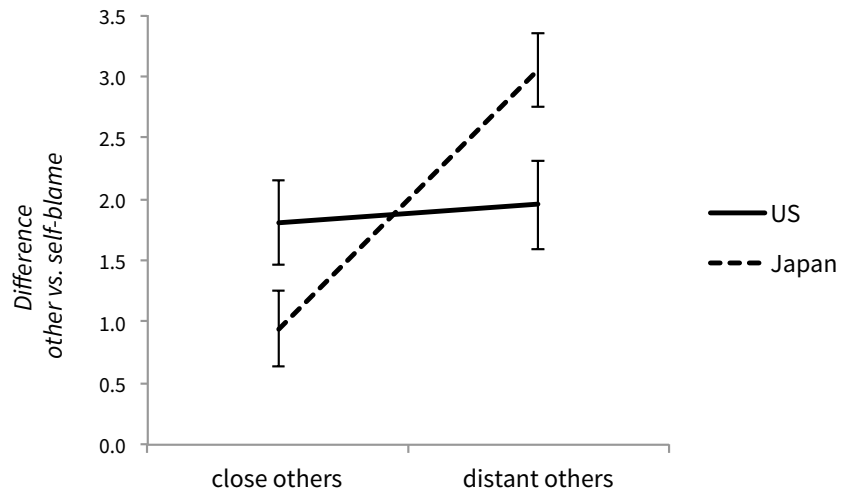
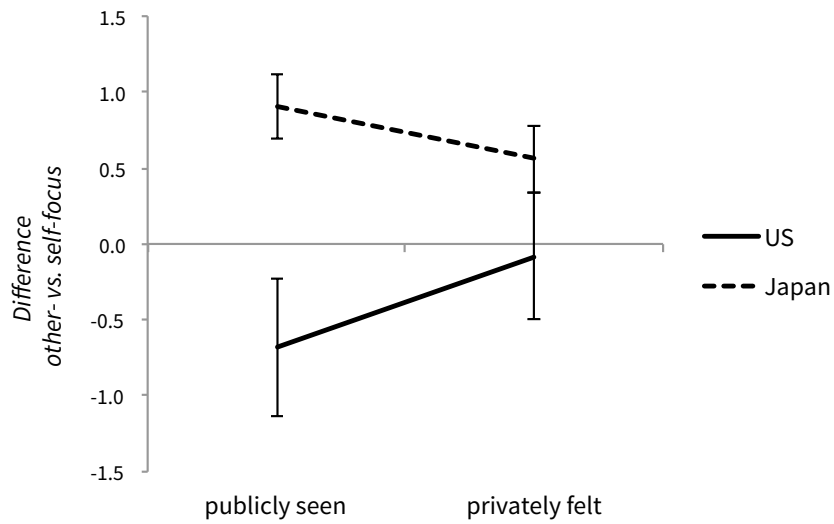


Figure 2. The appraisal of shame situations in terms of other- vs. self-focus, shown for situations that are publicly seen and those that are privately felt. The higher the difference score, the more participants focused on the opinion of others than on themselves.



Footnotes

¹The questionnaire included two additional contextual dimensions: “Intentionality” for anger (that is, others offending purposefully or being just inconsiderate) and “agency” for shame (that is, the situation being caused by the person themselves or by another person). Because of their high similarity to established appraisal dimensions (see, e.g., Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003) and thus the likelihood that they were confounded with our dependent variable of interest – appraisal focus—we decided to not include them in the current analysis.

²Participants rated each anger/shame situation on a total of 30 appraisals, action tendencies, and emotion words. The current paper focuses only on the subset that is pertinent to our hypotheses. These appraisals were also among the most relevant appraisals: For anger, other-blame was the second most intensely experienced appraisal in both the United States and Japan (only “perceiving the situation as unpleasant” was rated higher). For shame, other-focus and self-focus were the second and third most intensely experience appraisals in the United States (again, only “perceiving the situation as unpleasant” was rated higher) and they were the first and second most intensely experienced appraisals in Japan. The full list of items is available upon request from the first author.